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media reaction: alleged cia prisons overseas, avian flu, trade: anti-dumping duties on shrimp, thai-u.s. strategic dialogue; bangkok. UL

1. The Thai press, November 5-7, carried commentary on watch list items: a) Alleged CIA prisons overseas; b) Avian Flu; c) Trade: Anti-dumping duties on shrimp; and d) Thai-U.S. Strategic Dialogue.

2. Watch list: Alleged CIA prisons overseas

"No Place For Secret Prisons"

The lead editorial in the independent, English language The Nation read (11/5), "Thailand and the U.S. have traditionally been close allies, as well as partners in the U.S.-led global war on terror. This has involved a wide range of cooperation, involving intelligence sharing and the extradition of known international terrorists, not to mention the deployment of hundreds of Thai troops to Iraq for non-combat duty. But any cooperative arrangement that involves covert operations by foreign agents on Thai territory must be avoided, because of the possibility that such operations could run counter to Thai law and cause diplomatic problems with or resentment among Thailand's neighbors.... In denying the report, Thaksin made explicit reference to the 2003 arrest of Riduan Isamuddin, also known as Hambali, in Ayutthaya, who has since been handed over to US authorities and held in U.S. custody at a secret location.... There was nothing unusual about Hambali's case; any friendly country would have complied with the U.S. request for such a prominent terrorist suspect. But Thailand, with its own shabby record of brutal treatment of Muslim detainees, would do well to avoid associating itself too closely with the U.S., especially in regard to the treatment of prisoners, for which the U.S. has been reviled by the international community ever since the Abu Ghraib prison fiasco."

3. Watch list: Avian Flu

"Don't Hit The Flu Panic Button Yet"

The lead editorial in the top-circulation, moderately conservative, English language Bangkok Post read (11/5), "In the last three years we have been through the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) health crisis and are battling our third outbreak of bird flu. With so much experience, we should be confident in our ability to handle medical emergencies and have quarantine and control honed to a fine art. And perhaps all of us would have this confidence, were it not for those alarmists fanning the flames of hysteria with their predictions of a pandemic of biblical proportions. Yes, we should do everything in our power to control this latest threat and people are right to be scared of it. We must, and are, taking it seriously. But, no, there is no reason to panic or smuggle in illicit tubes of vaccine from China to secretly immunize birds, avoid cooked chicken, refuse to eat eggs or head for the hill.... So let's calm down, stop hyping this up and scaring ourselves half to death, and start making sensible contingency plans."

4. Watch list: Trade: Anti-dumping duties on shrimp

"A Different Kind Of Byrd Problem"

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